

Teaching Call Changes - Putting it all into action!

Placing your band

Ensure you have a treble ringer who is leading well and a tenor ringer with a good sense of rhythm. Place competent ringers on either side of the ringer who is learning. For the very first Call Change it is easier for your ringer to work with the bells he is already looking towards and following in rounds. That is to say to get the ringer to move down a place out of rounds and up a place to get back into rounds. [If you choose this option it means that the ringer cannot ring the 2, as, at this point in his ringing development he or she is unlikely to have learned how to lead].

The first call – what does your ringer need to know?

- That the call is made on the handstroke pull
- That he or she will ring that handstroke followed by the backstroke
- That the change of speed to get into the new place is made on the following handstroke
- That the change of speed is for one blow only and then normal rounds speed is resumed.

Explain to your ringer that this whole pull warning gives him or her the opportunity to adjust the intervening backstroke to enable the bell to be moved into the new place more easily, putting less energy in when preparing to move down a place and ring the handstroke more quickly and putting more energy in to make the bell swing higher in preparation for holding up the following handstroke when moving up a place.

The ringer needs to understand what happens at a call which bells are affected and in what way.

The call is 3 to 4:

The 3 is has to hold up, ringing more slowly to follow the 4 in 4ths place

1 2 3 4 5 6

1 2 3 4 5 6

The 4 is has to check in, ringing more quickly to follow the 2 in 3rds place

1 2 4 3 5 6

1 2 4 3 5 6

The 5 stays in 5ths place but now follows the 3 not the 4

Using questions to check understanding

Using questions to check understanding ensures the ringer has processed the information. When your bell is called to move down [or up] does it have to ring more quickly or more slowly?

This may seem obvious to the teacher, but when asked this question many ringers are confused to start with:

- What place is your bell sounding in?
- Which bell are you following?
- Which bell is that following?
- Who is following you?

And when they have advanced a little:

- Which bell is leading?
- Which bell is behind.

And even...

- What is the order of the bells?

Following the call the teacher should...

- Observe how accurately the call was executed.
- Feedback to the ringer.
- Feedback is used to reinforce what is wanted – so tell them if their striking the change was accurate and if the following back stroke was accurate.
- Feedback is used to change and improve things - so tell them where they were struggling and it was not sounding right
- Give the ringer the information to improve performance at the next attempt – for example, “next time put a little less weight on your backstroke so that it is easier to get the following handstroke down into the new place”.
- Give the ringer opportunity to repeating the action.
- Give feedback again – improved? Still having problems?
- Repeat these two simple changes until the accuracy of the striking improves.

This whole process can then be repeated again by calling the ringer to move up a place, i.e. looking to his or her left to move up and to the right to move down again into rounds. Again the feedback loop is repeated.

Moving on beyond the basic moves

When a ringer can accurately move up and down a place and return to steady rounds, he or she is ready to move on to more complicated sequences. The ringer can be introduced to common sequences such as Queens 1 3 5 2 4 6 , Tittums 1 4 2 5 3 6 or Whittingtons 1 5 3 2 4 6.

Whilst ringing more complicated sequences the teacher should use questions such as:

- What place in the row is your bell sounding in?”
- Which bell are you following.
- Which bell is that one following?

This process continues until the teacher is certain that the ringer is always aware of their place in the row. Another ringer could be used to stand behind and ask these question.

Reinforcing the sense of place

To help reinforce the sense of place in the row a ringer can be asked to call simple call changes, for example to call him or herself up and then back down a place or two places. A ringer who finds this exercise easy can move on to calling more complex sequences such as the bells into Queens or Tittums and back into rounds.

The use of exercises such as these can give the teacher a good indication of the ringers who already have a good idea of where each bell is at each call.

The ringers can be asked to say the number of the place they are ringing in. Starting with the bell leading the ringer says "Lead or first", the bell in seconds place then says "second", this progresses around the circle until all the ringers have said the number of the place they are ringing in!

Using variations to reinforce and to improve skills

Once the ringer is confidently ringing Call Changes and is:

- Striking accurately.
- Aware of his or her place in the row.
- Understands the calls and is not making mistakes.

Some variations can be added, this will develop skills and provide interest.

Variations

- Call by place in the row.
- Call and change at backstroke.
- Call by ringers names.
- Ring dodgy call changes - a call proceeded by a dodge! This variation demands an increased level of bell control to strike accurately and is a good exercise to use to work on accurate striking.
- Call from rounds directly into a known sequence such as Queens.

This requires an increased level of bell control but once the striking is good can be used for ringing at weddings and other occasions.

The ringer pathway

Initial skills – understand theory ring receive feedback, and repeat, gain accuracy.
